

REMARKS

The above amendment with the following remarks is submitted to be fully responsive to the Office Action of January 4, 2005. Reconsideration of this application in light of the amendment and the allowance of this application are respectfully requested.

Initially, it is noted that in the present case, a Preliminary Amendment was submitted on December 20, 2004 which amended portions of the Specification, submitted replacement sheets of drawings for Figures 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7, and added new dependent claims 46-56. The Examiner did not acknowledge the receipt and entry of the Preliminary Amendment in the Office Action. Therefore, a copy of the Preliminary Amendment, as previously filed, is enclosed herewith for entry and consideration. Correspondingly, claims 1-15 and 17-56 are pending in the present application and are believed to be in proper condition for allowance, claim 16 having been canceled by the above amendment.

Referring now to the Office Action, the Applicants acknowledge with appreciation, the Examiner's allowance of claims 42-45. In addition, the Applicants acknowledge with appreciation, the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 3, 8, 9, 12, 20, 24, 25, 28, 34, 36, 37, and 40 if rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim, and any intervening claims. In response thereto, claims 3, 8, 12, 20, 24, 28, 34, 36, 37 and 40 have been amended to be in independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim, and any intervening claims. Claims 9 and 25 depend from the amended claims 3 and 24, respectively, and thus, are also in proper form for allowance. Correspondingly, the allowance of claims 3, 8, 9, 12, 20, 24, 25, 28, 34, 36, 37, and 40 is respectfully requested.

Referring again to the Office Action, claims 1, 2, 4-7, 10, 11, 13-19, 21-23, 26, 27, 29-33, 35, 38, 39 and 41 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,345,715 to Palmaer which were cited by the Applicants in the submitted IDS of July 27, 2004. The Applicants respectfully disagree with this rejection for the reasons set forth herein below.

In particular, the Applicants contend that the Examiner's rejection of independent claim 1 is improper because the protrusion of Palmaer (as interpreted by the Examiner) does not block an entry aperture of an adjacent link element to retain a pivot rod that

interlinks elements other than the link element on which the protrusion is provided as specifically recited in claim 1. Careful examination of Figure 7 of the present application illustrates this feature of the present invention in which the protrusion of a link recited in claim 1 blocks an entry aperture of an adjacent link so as to retain a pivot rod. However, the retained pivot rod does not interconnect the link (with the protrusion that retains the pivot rod) to the adjacent link. Instead, the retained pivot rod interconnects the adjacent link with yet another link of the conveyor belt that is further along the conveyor belt, and not directly hinged to the link with the protrusion. In other words, the protrusion of one link element of claim 1 retains another link element's pivot rod.

In contrast, the protrusion of the link elements disclosed in Palmaer merely retain pivot rods that interconnect the link element on which the protrusion is provided (i.e. the link element's own pivot rod). Thus, this rejection is improper since Palmaer does not "teach every aspect of the claimed invention" as required under 35 U.S.C. § 102. (See MPEP §§ 706.02 and 2131). Correspondingly, the withdrawal of this rejection with respect to claim 1, and claims 2, 4-7, 9 and 10 that are ultimately dependent thereon are respectfully requested.

With respect to independent claim 11, Palmaer does not disclose transverse rod openings that are slotted openings as specifically recited in the claim. As shown in the cross sectional views of Figures 8 and 9 of Palmaer, the transverse rod openings of Palmaer are circular, and not slotted in any way. Palmaer further does not disclose a receiving slot sized to receive a protrusion. In this regard, the Examiner's indicated "receiving slot" in Figures 8 and 9 of Palmaer merely show an end space with no physical component on one side thereof. Such end space is not a slot. Thus, the withdrawal of this rejection with respect to independent claim 11 as well as dependent claims 13-15 and 17-19, 21 and 22 are requested, claim 16 having been canceled.

Nonetheless, to expedite prosecution of the present application, claim 11 has been amended above to specifically recite that the edge extension includes a rod receiving compartment for receiving an end of a pivot rod. Clearly, Palmaer fails to disclose these limitations recited in claim 11. Correspondingly, the withdrawal of this rejection with respect to claim 11, and claims 13-15, 17-19, 21 and 22 ultimately dependent thereon, are respectfully requested.

With regard to independent claim 23, the Palmaer reference does not disclose transverse rod openings that are slotted openings as previously noted. Thus, this rejection is believed to be improper. However, to expedite prosecution of the present application, claim 23 has been amended above to specifically recite that the protrusion of the edge extension abuts against the adjacent link element to thereby limit the extent to which the link elements are collapsed so as to define a minimum turn radius. Clearly, the protrusion of Palmaer as interpreted by the Examiner does not abut against the adjacent link to perform the functions as recited in claim 23. Correspondingly, the withdrawal of this rejection, and the allowance of claim 23, are respectfully requested.

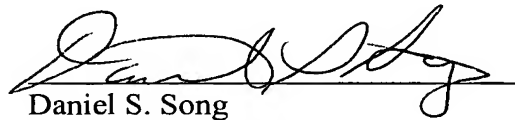
Regarding independent claim 26, the Palmaer reference does not disclose transverse rod openings that are slotted openings as specifically recited in the claim. Therefore, this rejection is believed to be improper and the withdrawal thereof with respect to claims 26, 27, 29 and 30 is requested. However, to expedite prosecution of the present application, independent claim 26 has been amended to recite that the protrusions are sized to allow the removal of the pivot rod when the links are extended away from each other. Clearly, such a feature is not disclosed in the cited Palmaer reference. Correspondingly, the allowance of claims 26, 27, 29 and 30 is respectfully requested.

Finally, with respect to independent claims 31 and 41, the Applicants note that the cited Palmaer reference fails to disclose an edge extension including an obstruction that at least partially defines a rod receiving compartment which is transverse as recited in these claims. In this regard, with respect to independent claim 31, Palmaer also does not disclose a transverse obstruction that prevents the end of the pivot rod from being forced into the rod receiving compartment from the entry aperture. Thus, because Palmaer does not disclose each and every feature of the claim, Applicants request the withdrawal of this rejection of claims 31 and 41, as well as claims 32, 33, 35, 38, and 39 ultimately dependent on claim 31.

However, to expedite prosecution, independent claims 31 and 41 have been amended to specifically recite that the transverse obstruction extends in a transverse direction that is parallel to a width of the conveyor belt. Clearly, the cited Palmaer reference fails to disclose such a transverse obstruction. Correspondingly, the Applicants request the allowance of claims 31-33, 35, 38, 39, and 41.

In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance and a notice to that effect is respectfully requested. However, if the Examiner deems that any issue remains after considering this response, he is invited to call the undersigned to expedite the prosecution and work out any such issue by telephone.

Respectfully submitted,



Daniel S. Song
Registration No. 43,143

NIXON PEABODY LLP
401 9th Street, N.W., Suite 900
Washington, D.C. 20004-2128
(202) 585-8000
(202) 585-8080 (Fax)
Customer No. 22204

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